DC
SUICIDE SQUAD
53
MAY '91
US $1.00
CAN $1.25
UK 50P
SUICIDE SQUAD:
THE DRAGON'S HOARD
ISHERWOOD
KESEL
OSTRANDER
YALE
ISHERWOOD
CAMPANELLA

SUICIDE SQUAD 53 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103 POSTMASTER: Send address changes to SUICIDE SQUAD DC Comics Subscriptions, PO Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510 Annual subscription rate $12.00, Canada $17.00, all other foreign $24.00 U.S. funds only Copyright © 1991 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 366 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 949-6850 Printed in U.S.A.
DC Comics Inc. A Warner Bros. Inc. Company

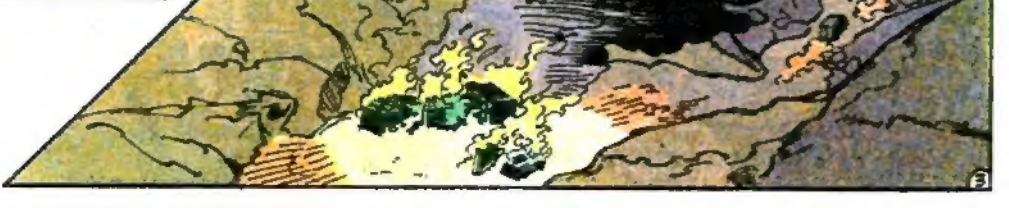
WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?! WHO IS IN CHARGE?!
I AM, MAJOR CAPTAIN VLADIMIR ILLYITCH ZIUKO, AT YOUR SERVICE. CAN I HELP YOU?
YOU CAN EXPLAIN WHAT THE HELL YOUR MEN ARE DOING, CAPTAIN!
THIS? OH, THIS IS A TRAGEDY, MAJOR. JUST WHEN I AND MY MEN WERE BEING RECALLED TO MOTHER RUSSIA, WE WERE AMBUSHED BY THESE DAMNED AFGHANS.
THEY KILLED US ALL AND GOT OUR ENTIRE SHIPMENT OF WEAPONS WHICH WERE GOING TO BE TRANSPORTED BACK TO THE SOVIET UNION. A TERRIBLE THING, ISN'T IT?
WHAT ARE YOU--?
UNFORTUNATELY, YOU CAME ALONG AT THE WRONG MOMENT, AND THE REBELS KILLED YOU AS WELL.
BRAAP!
KRAK
BRAPPA BRAPPA

OH! THIS IS LOVELY. FIGURE THE GALAH KNEW WHAT YOU WERE DOING, CAP'N?
THE MAJOR FIGURED OUT SOMETHING BUT--NO DOUBT--THOUGHT THE GUNS WERE MEANT FOR THE BLACK MARKET IN MOSCOW.
THERE'S NO MONEY TO BE MADE IN MOSCOW.

NAHR. THERE'S MONEY IN JAPAN, THOUGH. I GOT LOTS OF BUYERS THERE.
MEANTIME, THERE'S PLENTY OF PLACES TO STASH THESE BEAUTIES. CAMBODIA'S A GOOD SPOT FOR THAT. THE YANKS I SERVED WITH BACK IN 'NAM HAD IT ALL SCOPED OUT RIGHT PROPER. WE'LL TAKE 'EM THERE LIKE PLANNED, EH?

FWOOMP!

AS WE AGREED, YOU ARE EXPERIENCED IN THESE MATTERS; WE ARE NOT. SO WE NEED YOU.
BUT WE ARE NOT FOOLS, BILLY TIDEWATER. WE ARE DEAD MEN--AND IF YOU PLAY US FALSE, YOU ALSO ARE A DEAD MAN.
NO WORRIES, MATE. FAIR DINKUM, THAT'S WHAT CHER GET FROM ME, EH?
FAIR DINKUM. YES.

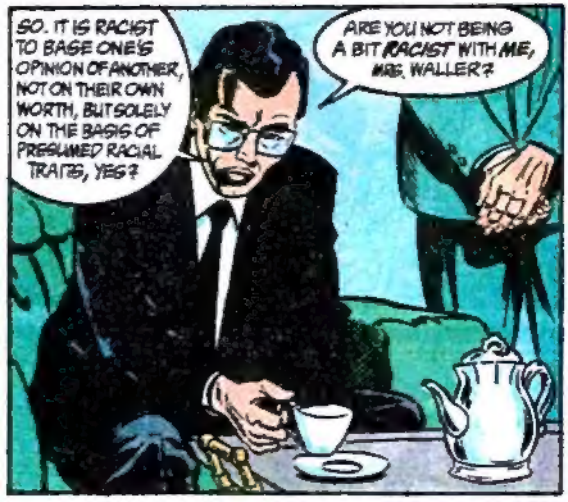


NYC -- NINE DAYS AGO.
THE YAKUZA, MRS. WALLER, ARE -- DO YOU KNOW OF OUR YAKUZA?
I KNOW ABOUT 'EM. SAMURAI MAFIA. VERY RIGHT WING, VERY POWERFUL, AND IN BED WITH A LOT OF YOUR POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND BUSINESS LEADERS.
WITH SOME -- PERHAPS MANY -- BUT NOT ALL. I DETEST THEM. THEY ARE ANIMALS. THEY BID FAIR TO MAKE OUR STREETS AS VIOLENT AS YOUR OWN.
OH MY. THAT WOULD NEVER DO, NOW WOULD IT?
AND IF I WANT SOMETHING, I'LL SERVE MYSELF, THANK YOU.
YOU WANT TO HIRE THE SQUAD TO WIPE OUT THE YAKUZA, MR. FUJIWARA?
NO. THAT IS QUITE BEYOND YOUR ABILITIES.
THE YAKUZA ARE BUYING AND BRINGING AUTOMATIC WEAPONS INTO JAPAN, MAKING THEM FAR MORE DANGEROUS.
ONE CLAN IN PARTICULAR, THE DAICHI DOKU, HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN THIS.
THERE IS AN AUSTRALIAN -- A MAN NAMED BILLY TIDEWATER -- WHO IS PLANNING TO SELL A GREAT AMOUNT OF THESE GUNS HE HAS HIDDEN AWAY SOMEWHERE IN CAMBODIA. THIS CACHE OF WEAPONS IS CALLED THE DRAGON'S HORDE.
WHAT I WISH IS FOR YOU AND YOUR SQUAD TO BREAK UP THIS CONNECTION AND CAPTURE OR DESTROY THE WEAPONS. YOU CAN DO THIS?

I SUPPOSE. YOU KNOW SO DAMN MUCH ABOUT THIS OPERATION. WHY DON'T YOU OR YOUR COMPANY DEAL WITH IT YOURSELF? HEAVEN KNOWS YOU PEOPLE GOT THE MONEY FOR IT!

IT WOULD NOT BE EFFICIENT. MY PEOPLE ARE NOT PROFESSIONALS TRAINED IN THESE MATTERS.
OF COURSE. AND THEY'RE NOT AS... EXPENDABLE... AS GAIJINS, EH?

YOU DO NOT CARE MUCH FOR NIPPON, MRS. WALLER?
DON'T CARE MUCH FOR RACIST CLAPTRAP, WHETHER IT'S ASIAN OR OCCIDENTAL, MR. FUJIWARA. BEEN HEARING A LOT OF IT COMING OUT OF "NIPPON" LATELY.


SO. IT IS RACIST TO BASE ONE'S OPINION OF ANOTHER, NOT ON THEIR OWN WORTH, BUT SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF PRESUMED RACIAL TRAITS, YES?
ARE YOU NOT BEING A BIT RACIST WITH ME, MRS. WALLER?

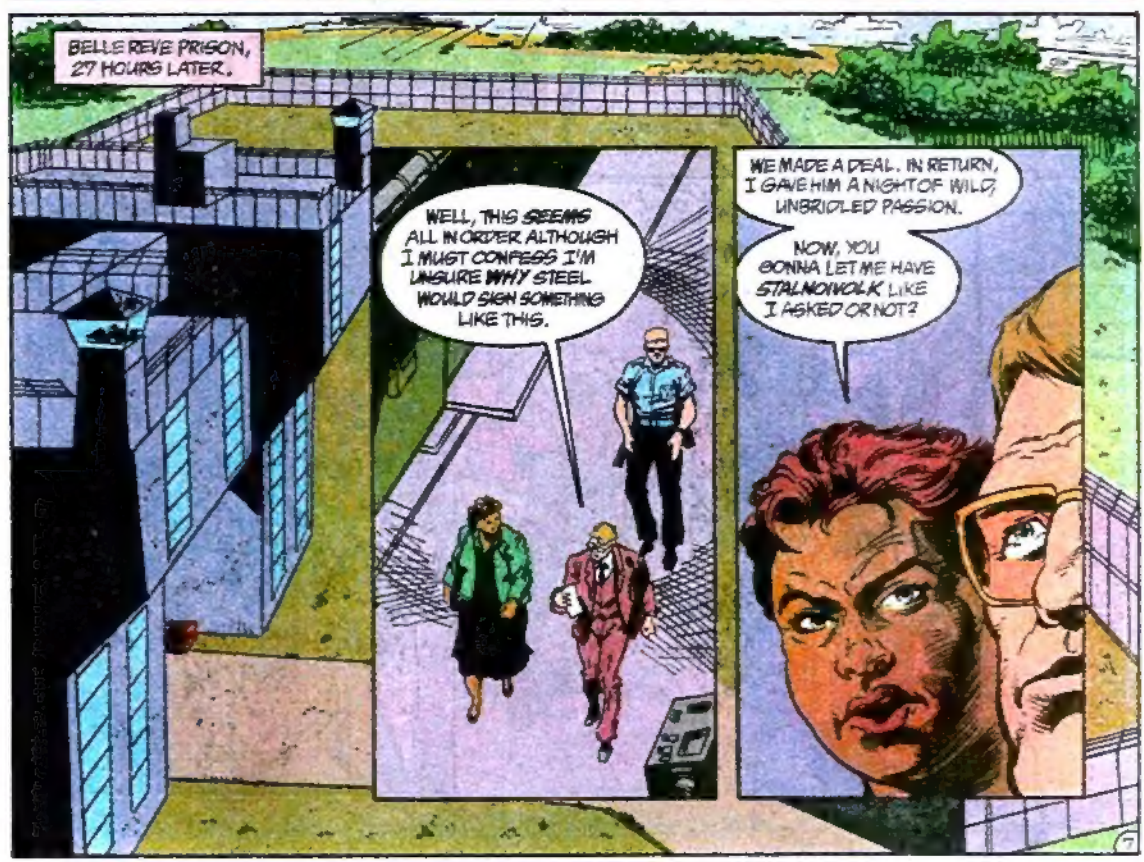
IF WE TAKE THIS JOB, WE GET ALL THE INFO YOU GOT, YOU PUT THE MONEY IN OUR ACCOUNT AND THEN YOU STAY THE HELL OUT OF OUR WAY.

AGREED. A PEN, OKAMI.
I MAY NEED SOME EXTRA HANDS FOR THIS. CALL IN SOME FAVORS.
I UNDERSTAND. WOULD THREE MILLION BE ENOUGH?

WELL, NOW THAT I KNOW THAT YOU'RE SERIOUS...
MRS. WALLER, I AM IN DEADLY EARNEST.
YOU BETTER BE. YOU JUST HIRED YOURSELF THE SUICIDE SQUAD.
THAT IS GOOD. AND NOW MY BUSINESS IN AMERICA IS FINISHED— AND I AM FREE TO RETURN TO MY HOME.
JAPAN. TOKYO. TWO HOURS LATER.
HOME OF THE DAICHI DOKU.
<HONORED OYABUN, I ASK YOUR PERMISSION TO SPEAK.>
<GRANTED. WHAT NEWS DO YOU BRING FROM THE WEST?>
<THE SUICIDE SQUAD HAS BEEN HIRED TO DEAL WITH THE DRAGON'S HORDE.>
6

<AND WHAT IS YOUR WILL CONCERNING MARK SHAW, LORD? THIS WOMAN, AMANDA WALLER, HAS HAD PAST DEALINGS WITH HIM, AND MAY CONTACT HIM. SHAW IS KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE YAKUZA AND THE DAIOHI DOKU IN PARTICULAR.>
<EVENTS PROCEED AS EXPECTED. YOU AND THE OTHERS KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT. PREPARE CAREFULLY, THEN EXECUTE.>

<TRUE--BUT THIS TIME THERE IS NO DEBT OF HONOR, OF GIRI NINJO, BINDING THIS CLAN TO MARK-SAN. WE ARE FREE TO ACT AS I DEEM FIT.
<MY WILL IS THIS--LET HIM LIVE. BUT IF SHAW GIVES ANY INFORMATION OR AID TO WALLER OR HER HIRELINGS THAT WILL JEOPARDIZE THIS OPERATION, KILL HIM. AND I WILL MOURN HIS DEATH AS AN HONORABLE ENEMY.>


BELLE REVE PRISON, 27 HOURS LATER.
WELL, THIS SEEMS ALL IN ORDER ALTHOUGH I MUST CONFESS I'M UNSURE WHY STEEL WOULD SIGN SOMETHING LIKE THIS.
WE MADE A DEAL. IN RETURN, I GAVE HIM A NIGHT OF WILD, UNBRIDLED PASSION.
NOW, YOU GONNA LET ME HAVE STALNOVOLK LIKE I ASKED OR NOT?

I HAVE TO BUT I DON'T HAVE TO LIKE IT. YOU'VE TWICE GIVEN THIS PRISON A BLACK EYE, MRS. WALLER--AND I DON'T INTEND TO SEE IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
THE DAYS OF YOUR USING THIS PRISON AS A PERSONAL RECRUITING BASE ARE OVER!
YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING, HASTINGS--YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIKE GIVING ME GORT BUT YOU GOTTA DO IT. SO--DO IT!
OFFICER MURPHY, RELEASE PRISONER GORT INTO THE CUSTODY OF MRS. WALLER. MAKE SURE SHE SIGNS FOR HIM. HE IS THEN HER CONCERN.
SO--HOW'S IT HANGING, MURPH?
OKAY. I'M BORED. PLACE IS JUST A PRISON NOW.
WHY NOT QUIT?
I WOULD BUT THEY KEEP THROWING MONEY AT ME.
COME WORK FOR ME.
YOU COULDN'T AFFORD ME, WALL. NOT EVEN AT A MILLION A MISSION.
SOMETIMES WE MAKE MORE. THINK ABOUT IT. IN THE MEANTIME, BRING STALNOWOLK TO THE FRONT GATE. I'LL MEET YOU THERE.
OKAY, THAT'S IT. HE'S ALL YOURS, AMANDA.
HELLO, GORT. YOU'RE GOING TO DO SOME WORK FOR ME.

I OWE YOU MY FREEDOM. I OWE YOU MY CAPTIVITY. I OWE YOU NOTHING. I WILL NOT KILL YOU--THIS TIME. I LEAVE NOW.
SMAP!

FZZZZT

THE FACTS OF LIFE.
I KNOW THOSE EXPERIMENTS THAT GAVE YOU SUPERSTRENGTH ALSO MADE YOUR SKIN SO TOUGH ONLY AN EXPLODING SHELL COULD PENETRATE IT. THAT WAS IN THE THIRTIES.
THIS IS THE NINETIES AND WE GOT THINGS CALLED LASERS THAT CAN BURN RIGHT THROUGH YOU. AND I HAVE A MAN WHO IS A DEAD SHOT WORKING THAT LASER. GET MY DRIFT?

I--HAVE YOUR "DRIFT."

I'M SO GLAD.
I KNOW YOU'VE BEEN COUNTING ON YOUR GOVERNMENT DOING A SWAP TO GET YOU BACK. FORGET IT. THERE'S BEEN NO OVERTURES.
YOU WORK WITH US AND I GUARANTEE THAT AT THE END OF IT YOU'LL BE FREE TO GO WHERE YOU WANT.

YOU PLAY ME FALSE AND OUR FRIEND WILL PUNCH AN ITTY BITTY LIGHT IN ONE OF YOUR EARS AND *OUT* THE OTHER.

THEM'S THE OPTIONS. YOU WILLING TO CO-OPERATE?

I DO NOTHING THAT BETRAYS MY COUNTRY.

"OH, I THINK RUSSIA WOULD WANT A PIECE OF THIS, *TOO*--IF THEY *KNEW*."

A DACHA OUTSIDE OF GORKI, USSR. SIX DAYS AGO.

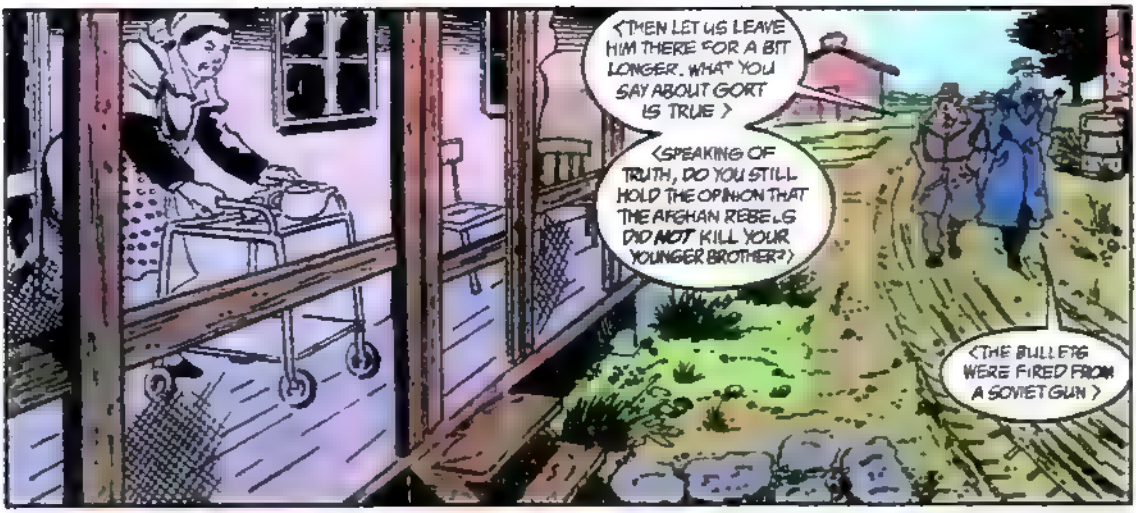
<WE HAVE PHASED OUT OUR USE OF THE PEOPLE'S HEROES, BLUE TRINITY, AND THAT ILK. BETTER TO HAVE FRESH BLOOD NOT TAINTED WITH LOSING TRADITIONS. OUR NEW MEMBERS CAN CARRY OUT ANY MISSION WE REQUIRE, I AM SURE, COMRADE *RASKOV*.>

<I HAVE THE FULLEST EXPECTATIONS AND CONFIDENCE IN THEM AND *YOU*, COMRADE *ZASTROW*. HOWEVER, WOULD IT NOT BE WISE TO PEPPER YOUR TEAM WITH ONE OR TWO MORE *SEASONED* PLAYERS?>

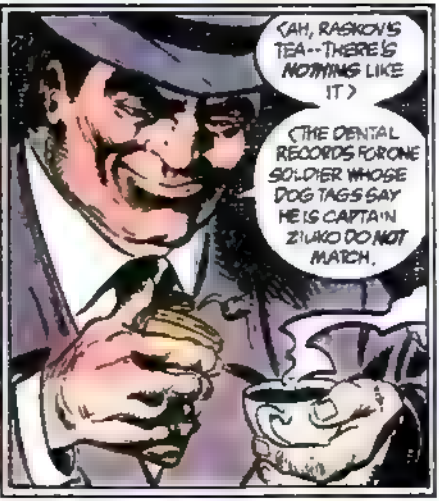
<STALNOI VOLK, FOR EXAMPLE. GIVE THE WORD AND WE SHALL NEGOTIATE HIS RELEASE>

<NO, I THINK NOT. OBEDIENCE... FOLLOWING ORDERS...THESE ARE NOT THE STEEL WOLF'S STRONG POINTS>

<THE MAN IS DANGEROUS--A THREAT TO THE SAFETY OF HIS COMRADES. NO, I THINK HE'S BETTER OFF WHERE HE IS>

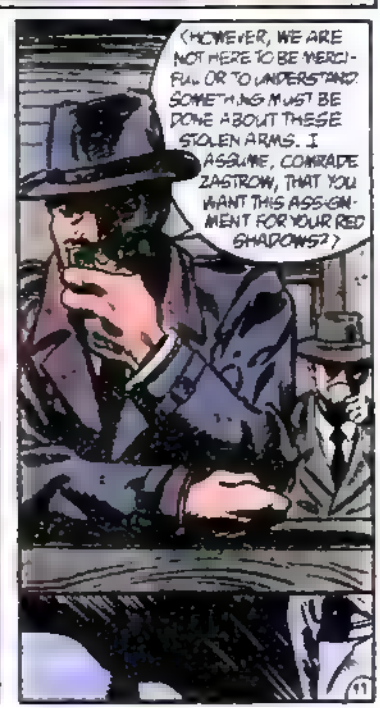

THEN LET US LEAVE HIM THERE FOR A BIT LONGER. WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT GORT IS TRUE
SPEAKING OF TRUTH, DO YOU STILL HOLD THE OPINION THAT THE AFGHAN REBELS DID NOT KILL YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER?
THE BULLETS WERE FIRED FROM A SOVIET GUN

SOVIET GUNS AND BULLETS WERE STOLEN IN THE SAME RAID. QUITE A BIT OF THEM. PERHAPS THE REBELS KILLED THEM WITH THE GUNS THEY JUST STOLE.
I REMAIN UNCONVINCED. TELL ME--THE OTHER SOLDIERS FOUND DEAD WITH MY BROTHER. ANY FINAL, POSITIVE I.D. MADE?


AH, RASKOV'S TEA--THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT
THE DENTAL RECORDS FOR ONE SOLDIER WHOSE DOG TAGS SAY HE IS CAPTAIN ZIUKO DO NOT MATCH.

MOREOVER, SOVIET MILITARY WEAPONS SEEM TO BE FINDING THEIR WAY INTO JAPAN AND INTO THE HANDS OF THE YAKUZA. THE SERIAL NUMBER OF THE ONE WEAPON WE'VE RETRIEVED BELONGED TO THE CONVOY SUPPOSEDLY TAKEN BY THE AFGHANS

THEN THEY WERE TAKEN BY ZIUKO AND THE DEATHS FAKED.
VERY LIKELY. AFGHAN VETERANS NEVER RECEIVED THE RESPECT THEIR WORLD WAR II BRETHREN DID, NOT TO MENTION THE FIRST PLACE IN FOOD LINES. NO JOBS, MONEY, HOUSING--IT'S SURPRISING MORE DON'T GO TO SUCH EXTREMES


HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT HERE TO BE MERCIFUL OR TO UNDERSTAND. SOMETHING MUST BE DONE ABOUT THESE STOLEN ARMS. I ASSUME, COMRADE ZASTROW, THAT YOU WANT THIS ASSIGNMENT FOR YOUR RED SHADOWS?

"COMRADE RASKOV, I WOULD INSIST UPON IT.)"
CAMBODIA. KHMER ROUGE CAMP SIX DAYS AGO.

I ASK YOU AGAIN, CAPTAIN ZIUKO, WHERE ARE THE GUNS?

AND I ANSWER AGAIN-- I DON'T KNOW. ONLY TIDEWATER KNEW, DAMN HIM--AND HE DISAPPEARED AFTER BETRAYING ME TO YOU

KHMER ROUGE HAVE REPUTATION FOR CRUELTY. NOT WHOLLY EARNED. NOT WHOLLY UNDESERVED.
KHMER ROUGE HAVE NOT ENDLESS PATIENCE. WE CONTROL COUNTRY. WILL NOT HAVE CONTROL CHALLENGED AGAIN. THESE WEAPONS --THEY COULD BE THREAT. WE WILL NOT TOLERATE THREATS. YOU WILL TELL US WHERE THEY ARE.

I WOULD. IF I COULD. WHOLE STINKING JUNGLE LOOKS THE SAME TO ME.
THIS IS FAR DANGER.

(TAKE HIM AWAY!)
(THE SPY IN ZIUKO'S GROUP SAYS THEY ARE READY TO ESCAPE TONIGHT. WE WILL STOP THEM, CORRECT?)
(NO)
(OUR SPY WILL MAINTAIN CONTACT AS WE TRACK ZIUKO AND HIS MEN. THEY WILL GO EITHER FOR THE WEAPONS--OR THIS TIDE-WATER. WE WILL HAVE THEM EITHER WAY.)
SAN FRANCISCO, 52 HOURS AGO
(YOU SEE MY PREDICAMENT, TATSU! I AM FORCED TO HIRE GAIJIN TO DEAL WITH THIS!)

(AND YOU HAVE RETAINED THE SERVICES OF THE SUICIDE SQUAD. AN ADMIRABLE CHOICE.)
(BE THAT AS IT MAY, I WOULD STILL PREFER SOMEONE OF BLOOD TO DEAL WITH THIS. ARE WE NOT FAMILY? HAVE YOU NO SENSE OF LOYALTY?
(YOU ARE A COUSIN FAR REMOVED TO MY LATE HUSBAND. THE LOYALTY YOU DEMAND FROM ME--)
(--SHOULD BE GIVEN WITHOUT DOUBT OR QUESTION, TATSU YAMASHIRO, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE YAKUZA KILLED YOUR HUSBAND AND YOUR CHILDREN!)
(I AM WELL AWARE WHO KILLED THOSE I LOVED, DEAR COUSIN!)
(BUT I HAVE A DEBT OF HONOR, OF GIRI-NINJO, REGARDING A FALLEN TEAMMATE. BEFORE THE OUTSIDERS DISBANDED, HALO TOOK A BLOW THAT WOULD HAVE KILLED ME.
(I HAVE SWORN TO TEND TO HER UNTIL SHE COMES OUT OF HER COMA. ARE YOU SUGGESTING I ABANDON THAT?)

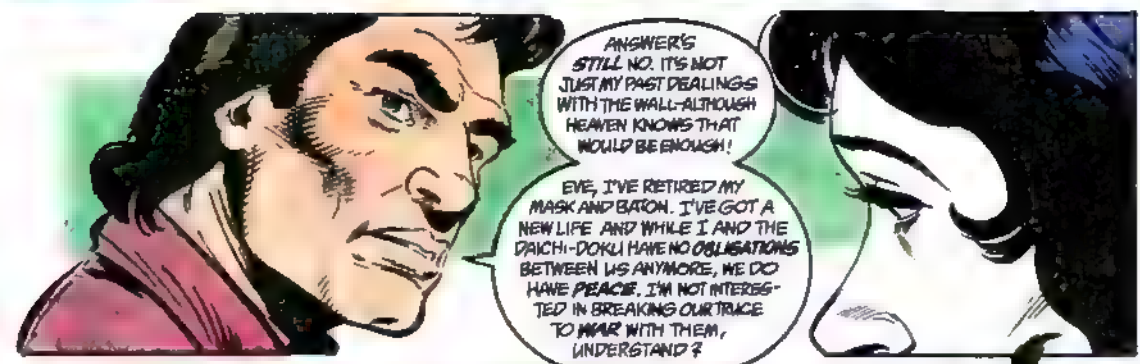
〈FORGIVE ME. I HAVE ACTED WITH GREAT PRESUMPTION.〉
〈I UNDERSTAND ALL TOO WELL YOUR FEELINGS. IF THE NEED IS DESPERATE, IF ACCOMMODATIONS CAN BE ARRANGED WITH MY OBLIGATIONS, PERHAPS I CAN HELP.〉
〈YOUR OFFER IS RECEIVED IN THE SPIRIT IN WHICH IT WAS GIVEN. FOR NOW, WE WILL LET THE MATTER REST WITH THE SUICIDE SQUAD.〉
DOMO ARIGATO, TAISU 〈THE TRANQUILITY OF YOUR HOME SHALL SUSTAIN ME ON MY FLIGHT BACK TO TOKYO THIS EVENING.〉
〈SAFE JOURNEY, COUSIN〉
NYC—48 HOURS AGO.

SOUTHERN CROSS SALVAGE CO. LTD.
<WOMAN APPROACHING MARK SHAW'S PLACE OF BUSINESS. PREPARE FOR TRANSMITTAL OF VISUAL REFERENCE.>
CLIK
CLIK
CLIK
CLIK
<GOT IT>
<TRANSMITTING. ALERT BACKUP. IF IDENTIFICATION IS POSITIVE, WE WILL ATTACK>
15

G'DAY! CAN I HELP YOU FIND SOMEONE?
YES. I'M LOOKING FOR MARK SHAW.
I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, MURRAY.
WELL, WELL-- IF IT ISN'T EVIE EDEN.
<CONFIRMATION IS RECEIVED --THE WOMAN HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS NIGHTSHADE, A KNOWN OPERATIVE OF WALLER'S SUICIDE SQUAD SHE AND SHAW ARE TO BE ELIMINATED>
<TAKE YOUR POSITIONS! AND ALERT CARMEVIE TO BE READY FOR MY SIGNAL!>
AND YOUR EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE YAKUZA IN GENERAL AND THE DAICHI DOKU IN PARTICULAR WOULD BE INVALUABLE. WILL YOU HELP?

NO.

I WARNED AMANDA THAT YOU'D SAY THAT. GIVEN HOW SHE USED YOU LAST TIME YOU HELPED THE SQUAD, I CAN UNDERSTAND IT.
I'VE FELT MUCH THE SAME WAY ABOUT HER BUT, MARK, SHE HAS CHANGED NOT DRAMATICALLY, BUT THERE IS SOME AND YOU WOULDN'T BE ON THE FIRING LINE -- JUST ADVISE US ON HOW TO HANDLE THE YAKUZA.


ANSWER'S STILL NO. IT'S NOT JUST MY PAST DEALINGS WITH THE WALL-ALTHOUGH HEAVEN KNOWS THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH!
EVE, I'VE RETIRED MY MASK AND BATON. I'VE GOT A NEW LIFE AND WHILE I AND THE DAICHI-DOKU HAVE NO OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN US ANYMORE, WE DO HAVE PEACE. I'M NOT INTERESTED IN BREAKING OUR TRUCE TO WAR WITH THEM, UNDERSTAND?

WHAM!
BRIIIT
BRIIIT
BRIIIT
KRASHING!

NAME'S CATSEYE!
HRA!
WHUNN!
VIN
VIN
VIN
BRUTT
BRUTT
BRUTT
ALL RIGHT, LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN, YOU SON OF A—!
HELIH!
KROK!
MARK!
TAKE THE GUNMEN! LEAVE CATSEYE TO ME!
19

FINE BY ME!
HA!
NO MAN IS MY EQUAL! HOW MUCH LESS EQUAL WILL A WOMAN BE!
HA!
FAP!
KUEH!
OH DEAR. A BIG STRONG MAN IS GOING TO ATTACK ME.
WHATEVER SHALL I DO?
20

BATTER UP!
BRITT
WHOK!
THIS ROUND IS YOURS.
THERE WILL BE ANOTHER.
<WITHDRAW!>
JAPANESE.
DAUCHI-DOKU. SEE THIS LITTLE BUTTON ON THE BACK OF THE GUY'S LAPEL? THAT'S THEIR SIGN.
RYU, YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.
EVE, TELL THE WALL I'VE CHANGED MY MIND.
I INTEND TO TAKE A VERY ACTIVE PART IN THIS MISSION.
2

TOKYO, TWO HOURS AGO.
<NOW, WHERE HAS OKAMI GONE TO? WELL, NEVER MIND. HE'LL CATCH UP WITH US LATER. TAKE ME TO THE OFFICE, ITTO.>
<YES, FUJIWARA-SAN!>
WHAROOM!
<MOST SATISFACTORY. THE OYABUN IS PLEASED WITH YOU, OKAMI. YOU HAVE BEEN A MOST LOYAL KOBUN. HE WILL MAKE SURE YOU ARE NAMED AS FUJIWARA'S SUCCESSOR.>
<UPON SO DOING, YOUR FIRST TASK WILL BE TO CANCEL THE CONTRACT WITH THE SUICIDE SQUAD.>
<IF YOU CANNOT-- LET THEM COME. THEY WILL WALK INTO THEIR OWN GRAVE.>
<I--I AM NOT SURE IT CAN BE BROKEN!>
DEXT: DIVINE WIND!

SUICIDE NOTES

DC COMICS INC.
666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103

JENETTE KAHN, President & Editor-in-Chief
DICK GIORDANO, VP-Editorial Director
DAN RAEPLER, Editor
JIM CHADWICK, Director-Design Services
JOE ORLANDO, VP-Creative Director
PAUL LEVITZ, Executive VP & Publisher
BRUCE BRISTOW, VP-Sales & Marketing
PATRICK CALDON, VP & Controller
TERRI CUNNINGHAM, Dir.-Editorial Administration
CHANTAL D'AULNIS, VP-Business Affairs
LILLIAN LASERSON, VP-Legal Affairs
MATTHEW RAGONE, Circulation Director
BOB ROZAKIS, Production Director

Dear Sirs & Ma'am,

I've just finished devouring SUICIDE SQUAD #49, and felt compelled to write and share my thoughts on it.

I know that I've raved about Mr. McDonnell and Mr. Isherwood's artwork in the past, but I'd like to take this opportunity to do so again. In my opinion, the art on this title is like a fine meal, only better, in that you can enjoy it over and over again. Now, I'd be the first to admit that Luke and Geof's work wouldn't fit in just any series (JLA for example); however, here, where the atmosphere is always dark and moody, and the characters' morale low, it fits like a glove. Good job, gentlemen.

John and Kim are also to be commended for the excellent plots and scripts they've turned out over the last 49 issues. Often when a writer stays on any one title for that long, he/she loses their objective outlook on the title and falls into a rut of rehashing prior storylines, but that's far from the case here. With the caliber of stories that John and Kim are capable of producing, I look forward to 50 more fantastic issues.

As for the events of this issue, I found the most engrossing to be the revelation that the Atom is no longer Ray Palmer, because I was convinced that the reports of his death were fictitious, an elaborate hoax devised by Waller, but if Adam Cray is now the Atom, then that means the reports are indeed true, which brings me to my question of who killed him? Could the Wall have had a hand in it? I kind of doubt it, but it wouldn't be the first death she's responsible for, although this one would be in a more direct manner.

That's it for this time around. I can't wait for next issue, but until then...

Marcus Fedrick
P.O. Box 514
Ellisville, MS 39437

* * * * *

Dear Squad Scribes,

It has been a while since my last letter, but college has a way of sapping one's energy and consuming vast quantities of time—but I earned a 3.75 this semester so I cannot complain. Back to business. The last two issues of the SQUAD have been excellent. You people are continuing to produce fine material each month.

I really am enjoying the type of character Amanda Waller has developed into; free of the government's influence she is much more wild and uninhibited (witness her beating of Carmichael in issue #49). I like the Tiger's new "hard-guy" image, but I feel it is merely a façade, so I am expecting something to happen with him soon. Steel Wolf returns in issue #53, and I am glad to hear it! I hope he stays on as a permanent member of the cast—the Squad needs muscle. I look forward to issue #50; the advertisement for it is quite intriguing.

Luke McDonnell is a good penciller. Lord knows he defined the look of the new Squad, but I prefer Geof Isherwood on pencils. It is not that Luke is not good; I simply am a big fan of Geof's art, and like to see it as much as possible. Yet issue #49's art was good, and I am sure #50 will be, too. The covers over the past two issues have been awesome; Breyfogle and Lightle are great cover men, and seeing them on this book more often would not hurt sales in any way.

It has been a great fifth year. Please continue the fine work. Until the next letter, take care.

Scott R. Pyle
428 Esch Hall
IUP
Indiana, PA 15705

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Okay, now we're on a roll. Batgirl—excuse me, Oracle—has now joined the Squad. Things are looking up for the team. First Vixen, now Oracle, and coming soon...the Dead Dr. Light. Way cool.

Great Breyfogle cover. Great McDonnell/Isherwood interior. I think this is the art team that you guys should keep forever. As long as you don't lose Ostrander and Yale, though, it can't be that bad.

Looking forward to issue #50 and then the "Lawton's Luggage" story. Thanks for the great book. I just love it.

David Gallacher
4151 Monarch Way
Salt Lake City, UT 84124

David, Luke's busy on some secret upcoming project, so he won't be pitching in quite so often. More on Luke in the months to come.

Meanwhile, what did you folks think about the SQUAD's new regular art team, Geof Isherwood and Robert Campanella? I think these two look great together, and you can rest assured that SUICIDE SQUAD #53–57 will have some of the best artwork this book has ever seen.

* * * * *

Dear Suicidal Ones,

Finally Barbara Gordon is standing on her own as a character...well, you know what I mean. I think that it's a perfect choice to take this bright young woman and show that being handicapped hasn't stopped her need to be a hero. Quite frankly, Oracle is ten times more interesting than Batgirl ever was! I look forward to her becoming a more active part of the team.

And okay, so Ray Palmer is dead! We get the picture. But that doesn't mean that he wasn't "reincarnated" into Adam Cray! Remember the first rule of super deaths...don't believe unless you see the body, and even then don't believe!

Mark Phillips
P.O. Box 1927
Johnson City, TN 37605

Pretty classy comment, Phillips, but I agree that Oracle is a vital, evolving character, and that Batgirl usually wasn't portrayed that way.

* * * * *

Dear Dan & Co.,

This may sound clichéd, but I'd been thinking of giving up on SUICIDE SQUAD before reading #49. After the attempt at rejuvenation through the Phoenix Gambit, the book had lost its sense of direction, and it seemed John and Kim were running out of interest. 'Out of Control' was probably the best issue in a couple of years, and just in time with the landmark 50th issue next up. There's something about the Bat-family that makes them inherently interesting characters, and Barbara Gordon's recent role in this book has brought the best out of the writers—and she certainly deserves not to be forgotten after her crippling injuries and experiences in THE KILLING JOKE. I presume that Amanda is asking her whether she wants to become more involved with the Squad, if still anonymously, and I think she's likely to accept the role as it would give her something other than the Joker to aim at.

Meanwhile, I look forward to seeing the Boomerang/Deadshot tension continue to build and then snap; the town isn't big enough for the two of them. And there can't be *two* Atoms. At least, not counting the Golden Age one!

Happy 50th, and happy holidays! A lot of DC books are reaching that 50th issue soon; I wonder which will make it to #100?

Malcolm Bourne
Lancashire, England

A lot can happen in 50 months, Malcolm. How has your life changed since SUICIDE SQUAD made its debut? Four and a half years is a long time for humans (as opposed to characters in comics).

Whoops. Almost got philosophical there! Let's get back to subplots, fast!

* * * * *

Dear Dan:

The spotlight in SUICIDE SQUAD #48 and #49 on Barbara Gordon's psychological demons was a very well-written way to justify her inclusion in the Squad. Up until now, Barbara's paralysis has been portrayed strictly physically; John obviously saw the opportunity to explore the repercussions more fully and he did a masterful job. While Barbara is unquestionably more reasonable than some others in the Squad, she is not entirely sound or at peace with herself, and that makes her fit in with the other SS members, if just peripherally. While Batgirl may be a character seen only in flashback stories, I am glad to see that Barbara Gordon has found herself an active, visible venue in the DC Universe. Her history as a superheroine and her filial and professional relationship with James Gordon are two rich qualities she brings into this book. I hope her role gradually expands to the same level as Captain Boomerang or Ben.

The Thinker ranks with Ifrit as a dangerous character to be hanging around the Squad and being experimented on. He surely does have potential to cause all

kinds of problems, and the Squad surely doesn't lack for those! I hope he's used prudently and doesn't become a deus ex machina. The identity of the new Atom was surprising and sad at the same time. (I'm curious as to how he got the belt, by the way.) But I had hoped that this was Ray Palmer. His murder, if he is indeed dead, is too big a story to be left unwritten. But the old rule, "He/She ain't dead unless one sees the body," leaves me hopeful that Ray will return eventually.

I'm looking forward to seeing some original SS members next month. And congratulations on reaching the fifty-issue mark! Despite featuring a team that inherently holds no guarantees for its members, SUICIDE SQUAD has always provided high-quality stories and art for its readers.

Jim Kelly
29 West Melrose Street
Valley Stream, NY 11580-4503

Hey, Jim, if you think about it, not one member of the original Suicide Squad survives to this day. Karin Grace died during Millennium, Rick Flag died in a nuclear explosion, Jeff Bright probably bought it himself in #50, and Doctor Evans fell to his death in Tibet. Some legacy, huh?

Actually, though, no one ever recovered Evan's body from the frozen wastes of the Himalayas...

Man, I hope John and Kim aren't reading this...

* * * * *

Suicide Notes:

Issue #49 was only slightly more interesting than #48. At least Oracle isn't going to be a whiner and showed some guts. When I read issue #48 I thought I was reading *X-Factor* and a certain other annoying redhead. The Squad is looking pretty weak with Boomerang, Tiger, and Deadshot as the only members. Having Waller beat up on the new Thinker made me sick. Let's face it, guys, she is nothing more than an average human with a slightly above average intellect. What I really liked in both issues was the sense of history and things from the past still lingering about—the real Thinker's helmet, Oracle, Cliff Carmichael, and Dr. LaGrieve to name a few.

The characterization, as always, was immense. The Tiger talking to Waller reminded me of the old days except that Turner's a little less nice. Deadshot still wanting his stuff and still blaming Boomerang was phenomenal. By the way, Deadshot out of costume was interesting. I am fully against this new no-costume look, but found that seeing Deadshot without the mask was more intense than usual—if such a thing is possible. Boomerang's reaction to Deadshot's "bang" remark was standard, for him.

Then there's Flag. He was never my favorite character. I could never really understand those "doing my duty" types. Flag, though, occasionally went against his orders to do what he thought was right. He was loyal to the Squad even though he didn't really like some of the members. When he died, he went out in the manner that perfectly fit him and his attitude. It was one of my favorite issues, even if you did kill off a great team of bad guys. I'm looking forward to issue #50.

Barry F. Burke
2201 Palmer Avenue, Apt 1C
New Rochelle, NY 10801

P.S. Thanks for unmasking Faxman—er... um...I meant Atom.

* * * * *

Dear Suicide Squad,

The latest issue, focusing on Amanda, was one of the best of the series. It was a good reminder of why Amanda is in charge, as it shows her strong character. She seems to be one of the most real "people" in comics today. Cliff Carmichael as the new Thinker is a great improvement on the idea behind the villain.

Please consider making Oracle a full-time member. Oracle, who is Barbara Gordon, is too good to be left in limbo. Are you planning on having an annual or any crossovers in the next year?

Could you also tell us if John K. Snyder is currently doing any work for DC? He would be a great choice for a SUICIDE SQUAD Annual.

Dennis R. Wood

P.S. The illustration John K. Snyder did for Ultra the Multi-Alien was fantastic and I am anxiously awaiting the mini-series.

Thanks for the kind words, Dennis. John K. Snyder III, (a.k.a.Dr. 3), is currently hard at work on an upcoming MISTER E series with writer K.W. Jeter and inker Jay Geldhof. I've seen some of the pages, and if you folks liked what John did here for the SQUAD, then you're going to love *MISTER E.*

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Okay, so Adam Cray is the "new" Atom. The "new" Atom wears green. The "new" Atom fought some scorpions. Funny thing is, I think Adam Cray is actually Ray Palmer. Have I got you cornered yet?

So the "new" (a lot of that this year, isn't there?) Thinker and Oracle are now actual, paid (?) members of the Squad. This is good. At least those of us who read FIRESTORM are partly sated.

There was so much I liked about this issue, I'll have a hard time condensing it. Boomerang's and Deadshot's parts were entertaining and needed, especially after their lack of action in the Kobra story. But Amanda! Amanda and her vicious beating of Carmichael was a sight to see. How often does the Wall get to show her strengths? Let's see that again.

Now, the J.E.B. Stuart appearance thrilled me to pieces. It will be great to see him in future issues, maybe even to discover the final fates of both the Monster Squad, and Sgt. Rock and Easy Company (Maybe?)

Sir Jon Johnson
64 Indian Hill Avenue
Portland, CT 06480

No information on the Monster Squad, m'lord; I think the last contemporary appearance of any of Easy Company was by Wildman (now a full-fledged general) in the INVASION! crossover issue of FIRESTORM #80.

But maybe we should get General J.E.B. Stewart and General Wildman together for a reunion or something. I'm sure the old coots lost touch years ago...

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

I've never written to SUICIDE SQUAD before, but I hope you won't hold that against me. I've been John Ostrander's *biggest* fan since the conception of the "new" Squad in the pages of the LEGENDS miniseries. Every issue of SS is enshrouded in mystery due to Ostrander's (and Yale's) unique imagination. Unlike other titles, where the reader is always one step ahead of the story, readers of SQUAD are strung along, expecting the same run-of-the-mill comic book ending to occur, but are always shocked by those Ostrander twists which lead to an unexpected ending. For example, Ravan's death at the end of issue #47 was something that I never expected to happen.

On the issue of death, I am pleased with the fact that when someone dies within these pages, they're really dead and don't miraculously come back to life (until issue #50, of course). Since I've been with the Squad since issue #1, I've seen oodles of characters (heroes and villains) buy the farm. I think the only character who died who I didn't cry for, not even shedding one tear for, was Dr. Light. From the beginning, I felt that he just wasn't Squad material, and I guess you thought so, too. You know, they say great minds think alike.

Now, more specifically, I turn my attention to issue #49. This issue left me with the sense that all of the Squadders have become tougher. All the characters are rough around the edges and I like that. There are no longer any pantywaists like Dr. Light on the team, which means that each issue will be rooted in action, not inaction.

So Ray Palmer's really dead. Well bless Bess and pass out cigars! The "old" Atom has never been one of my DC favorites, and I hope now the whole "Atom" legend can be overhauled with this Adam Cray guy, the "new" Atom. I await eagerly for Cray's story to unfold. Is he any relation to the very dead senator named Joe Cray? If so, a confrontation with Deadshot is in order, since it was Lawton who murdered Senator Cray.

So, the Wall's going to add Cliff Carmichael (a.k.a. The New Thinker) to the Squad's ranks. With this New Thinker does the Squad need Oracle anymore? On the subject of Oracle, why don't you give her the gizmos that allowed Ravan to walk again? I think Barbara would be more than grateful and a great addition to the Squad, since you've made her rough around the edges, too.

I think the "Squad-for-hire" concept is another example of Ostrander's creative genius, and I think you should go with it for the time being till John and Kim have another brainstorm. This "new" Squad is a pretty sound action force with Amanda at the helm; however, if Nemesis and Nightshade rejoined along with Green Arrow, then I'd really be impressed. So, go ahead. Impress me! I can't wait till #50 hits the shelves!!

John Babos
(No address given)

You want Nemesis? You got him!
You want Nightshade? You got her!
You want Green Arrow? Read GREEN ARROW! Sorry! Maybe next time, John. Thanks for the letter!

* * * * *

The Cauldron of the Next Issue Box: Betrayal! Murder! Action! Surprise and intrigue!

"The Dragon's Horde" part 2 of 5 in SUICIDE SQUAD #54 will drive you folks completely up the walls! And an all-new pack of Red Shadows are on the trail of the Horde as are the Kampuchean Khmer Rouge. With Amanda and the Squad zeroing in on the Soviet weapons cache as well, can chaos be far behind?

Plus, this issue has the surprise ending to beat all surprise endings, so don't miss it! I'll see you later!

—Dan Raspler
'Bat aint runnin' but it takes my time...